DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 457 103 SO 032 984

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TITLE	Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past. Critical Perspectives on the Past.
ISBN	ISBN-1-56639-856-8
PUB DATE	2001-00-00
NOTE	272p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Temple University Press, c/o Chicago Distribution Center, 11030 South Langley Avenue, Chicago, IL 60628 (paperback: ISBN-1-56639-856-8, $22.95; hardcover: ISBN-1-56639-855-X, $64.50). Tel: 800-621-2736 (Toll Free); Fax: 800-621-8476 (Toll Free); Web site: http://www.temple.edu/tempress/order.html.
PUB TYPE	Books (010) -- Information Analyses (070)
EDRS PRICE	Document Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Ambiguity; *Culture Conflict; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; *Historiography; *History Instruction; Primary Sources; *Theory Practice Relationship
IDENTIFIERS	Historical Research

ABSTRACT

What ways of thinking, writing, and questioning would be lost if we eliminated history from the curriculum? The essays in this book begin with the basic assumption that history teaches people a way to make choices, to balance opinions, to tell stories, and to become uneasy--when necessary--about the stories that are told. The book is concerned with the question of understanding historical understanding. What is it that historians do when they "read historically?" What acts of cognition lead to sophisticated historical interpretations? Chapter 1 provides an overview of its themes. Chapter 2 focuses on the challenges faced by novices in learning history. Chapter 3 compares the readings of high school students with those of professional historians. Chapter 4 is a case study of two college students, both preparing to become teachers. Chapter 5 focuses on how fifth and seventh graders "pictured the past" by making drawings of Pilgrims, Western Settlers, and Hippies. Their responses show the resilience, in the face of curriculum interventions designed to overcome them, of traditional assumptions about gender. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 take up history teaching. Chapters 9 and 10 seek a broader context for history instruction by considering it alongside other "memory sites" in society. (Each chapter includes notes.) (BT)

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